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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TAGS)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: MALIKI IMPATIENT TO BEGIN MORE INTENSIVE MILITARY
OPERATIONS IN NINEWA (MOSUL)

REF: A. BAGHDAD 422
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1022

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Classified By: Pol-Mil Minister Counselor Marcie B. Ries for reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: At an April 14 Crisis Action Cell (CAC) concerning operations in Ninewa province, Prime Minister Maliki complained that the operational plan briefing lacked substance; Vice President Hashimi and Deputy Prime Minister Salih concurred. Maliki--clearly frustrated by what he perceived as inertia--directed his on-scene commander, Lieutenant General Riyadh, to begin operations in Ninewa on May 1 which would secure key intersections and lines of communication, with subsequent targeting and elimination of AQI cells in Mosul. Lieutenant General Austin, Commander of the Multi-National Corps in Iraq, noted this was a combined Coalition and Iraqi Security Force (ISF) mission which had worked closely to develop a comprehensive operations plan (Reftel A). He emphasized the pressing need for an equally comprehensive reconstruction plan. His concise and succinct summary of the three mission phases seemed to reassure Maliki. Nonetheless, the Prime Minister ordered formation of new planning cells and gave his staff one week to come up with a much more specific and comprehensive operational plan and briefing. Embassy Baghdad assesses that Maliki is anxious to begin more intense combat operations in Ninewa, but lacks full confidence in General Riyadh and his plan, at least as briefed. END SUMMARY.

Mosul Ops Briefing: Not Ready for Prime Time

[1](#)2. (S) At an April 14 CAC, called by National Security Advisor (NSA) Rubaie to review the operations plan for Ninewa, Prime Minister Maliki made clear his desire to establish the rule of law, maintain governmental control, and provide increased essential services throughout the province in the very near future. Attending the CAC were Vice President Hashimi, Deputy Prime Minister Salih, Minister of Interior Bulani, Ninewa Governor Kashmoula, Ninewa Operations Center Commander (NiOC) Lt Gen Riyadh, Chief of Staff General Babikir, MNC-I Commanding General Austin, MNF-I staff, and a roomful of their subordinates. A clearly frustrated Maliki impatiently listened to the first half-hour of briefings by both his intelligence services and General Riyadh before

finally interrupting and demanding to "see the plan." He reproached them for wasting his time with what he considered as a far too generalized assessment about al-Qaeda (AQI) threats. He told them he was unhappy with their complaints about shortages of troops and equipment without providing him with specific force requirements. Maliki reminded Riyadh the last CAC devoted to Mosul occurred at the beginning of February and he saw nothing new in this briefing. Vice President Hashimi--a former general officer--agreed, highlighting that the briefing lacked clear assessments of the threat, robust operations plan, detailed force requirements, and a clearly delineated timeline. Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih echoed these sentiments, saying he was disappointed the briefing lacked decisiveness. (Comment: Per Reftel A, the Cabinet had specifically tasked this CAC to provide detailed timelines, issues with police and judiciary, and proposed operations to secure the border checkpoint at Rabiah. None were covered until Maliki, Hashimi, or Saleh raised them. PolOff is a thirty-year military veteran who concurs with their assessment of the briefing. End Comment.)

Maliki Presses Commanders for Action

13. (S) When Rubaie asked for additional comments, Maliki pressed Riyadh harder, peppering him with multiple, rapid-fire questions: "Are you planning the operations from outside the city going in or vice versa?", "If you don't have enough forces, what do you need and what kind of operations will you conduct in the meantime?", "You say the borders are not secure, what do you need to secure them?", "What is your timeline for all of these operations?" General Riyadh--his hands folded across his chest and jaw clenched--groused that his reserve forces had been diverted to Basrah which left him without a timeline. The Prime Minister cut him off and said in a measured tone that the Ninewa operation was not open-ended and he had expected to hear at this briefing a

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start date for more intense military operations. He reminded Riyadh there were 20 military battalions and 4 border battalions in Ninewa and insisted that Riyadh begin employing these forces in the operations in Mosul by May 1. The PM began dictating his own operational mission plan to Riyadh: secure major road intersections, control lines of communication (LOC), but not "clear and hold" individual neighborhoods since Governor Kashmoula assessed many of them as "safe". Maliki added that the primary mission initially would be discovering the location and elimination of specific AQI targets by special operations forces. After a short discussion on available forces to accomplish this and the other missions, the PM relented slightly and said he would make sure that the MinDef would push additional conventional and special forces into this operation as soon as feasible. Vice President Hashimi continued to press for a more specific timeline and advised Riyadh to direct his force requests directly to the National Operations Center (NOC). (Note: later in the meeting--as the impact of recent force and equipment diversions to Basrah became increasingly clear--Maliki told Riyadh to direct force and equipment requests directly to him, much to the consternation of General Babakir, Commander of Iraqi Joint Forces. End Note).

Combined Operations, Comprehensive Reconstruction

14. (S) The Multinational Corps Commander in Iraq (MNC-I), Lt Gen Austin, tactfully reminded everyone in the room that this was a combined Coalition and Iraqi Security Force (ISF) operation. As such, Coalition Force (CF) commanders had worked closely with the ISF to develop the comprehensive plan briefed in February (Reftel A). Both the CF and ISF were now executing Phase I of that plan, he said, which included the development of eleven secure checkpoints around Mosul. He

estimated these would be complete by the end of May or early June. The much more intensive Phase II could then begin around mid-summer, but he added that CF and ISF already routinely conducted special operations activity in Ninewa. He stipulated that future operations must also include comprehensive reconstruction efforts. General Austin then countered an earlier statement about the lack of security operations in the Jazeera desert, west of Mosul, noting numerous special operations engagements had been conducted there as well. General Austin acknowledged that operations in Basrah and Baghdad had correctly required diversion of resources to ensure their success, but those operations must be completed before embarking on a something similar in Ninewa (Note: as Lt Gen Austin finished, Brigadier General Dr. Nabil from the Iraqi National Intelligence Agency whispered to PolOffs that it took General Austin just five minutes to succinctly and clearly explain the entire Iraqi hour-long briefing. End note.)

Pushback and Agreement on More Forces, Better Intelligence

15. (S) General Austin's comments seemed to reassure Maliki, but the discussion returned full-circle to the shortfalls in Mosul caused by operations in Basrah. Lt Gen Riyadh, his hands still folded across his chest, listened intently as Lt Gen Aziz from the operations staff briefed Maliki about early efforts to divert two brigade equivalents to Mosul, but ultimately sent to Basrah. General Babakir complained that this had upset the planned timeline. Governor Kashmoula chimed in and told Maliki that the CF gave the ISF everything it wanted, but the ISF got nothing from the MOD. Maliki listened carefully, then queried Babakir about military recruitment numbers. The General said enlistments were far better than expected, but the real issue was training. Lt Gen Aziz agreed and advised shifting the timeline to the right, which would delay the start of Phase II operations. This did not please Maliki and he answered by reiterating his own plan--holding intersections and major LOCs now, followed by attacks on AQI within a few weeks. Riyadh broke his silence and emphasized to Maliki that he already was conducting operations like this in Mosul but lacked sufficient numbers of Special Forces to do the job properly. NSA Rubaie, General Riyadh, and General Talib (from Iraqi SpecOps) then began a vigorous three-way debate about current intelligence requirements and available forces. After much discussion, both Rubaie and Talib promised Riyadh better

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targeting intelligence and up to two more Fpecial operations battalions.

Getting the Briefing to Prime Time

16. (S) Despite their agreement, Maliki remained dissatisfied and he ordered formation of four separate planning cells: operations, intelligence, essential services, and--at the behest of IntMin Bolani--an information ops cell. Maliki set the deadline for completion of an updated operations plan for Monday, April 21. He ordered the CAC to reassemble for an updated briefing then.

Comment

17. (S) General Riyadh's restrained demeanor and unfocused briefing clearly frustrated Prime Minister Maliki, Vice President Hashimi and Deputy Prime Minister Salih. It gave the impression of inertia, which even if untrue, exasperated Maliki who is clearly impatient to begin more intense military operations in Mosul. But Maliki seemed willing--for now--to accept something less than the extensive military operations conducted last month in Basrah (and continuing today). If Riyadh does not gain the Prime Minister's support

at the next CAC, he runs the risk that Maliki will dictate his tactical mission, force structure, and timeline. Of note, Ninewa has not progressed to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC), so ISF operations must be coordinated with Coalition Forces. Although this may help mitigate an impulse towards precipitous military operations by Maliki, the true solution is convincing him that the plan approved in February remains the best option for defeating AQI in Mosul. But as he made clear during this CAC, Maliki wants to see evidence that his commanders and forces are fully engaged and taking action. That is a positive development, if his expectations are well-managed. On the other hand, the Prime Minister never really pressed Riyadh or his staff about continuing to provide essential citizen services like electricity, water, and reconstruction during this operation, even though emphasized numerous times by both General Austin and NSA Rumbaie. End Comment.

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